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SUBJECT: DAWA STRATEGIST ON PARTY'S SUPPORT FOR FEDERALISM
IN IRAQ

REF: BAGHDAD 3789

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bob Gilchrist for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Falih al-Fiyadh, Council of Representatives (CoR) member and Dawa party strategist, told PolOff on October 16 that the Dawa party supported SCIRI in its drive to pass a regions formation law (reftel) because the party supports the principle of federalism and wanted to respect the constitution by passing such a law within the specified timeframe. On the other hand, al-Fiyadh said that Dawa was in no hurry to see the law implemented. "We supported the 50 percent hurdle for voter participation," he continued, "and we would have supported a waiting period greater than 18 months." According to al-Fiyadh, Dawa was not worried that SCIRI would try to drive through a nine-province "Shiastan" in southern Iraq: "If federalism proceeds on a sectarian basis, or if there is a referendum before the people are ready for it, the people will vote it down."

¶2. (C) In contrast to Dawa, al-Fiyadh characterized Fadhila as a "recent entrant" to the Shi'a political scene without deep organizational roots and popular support. As a result, he continued, Fadhila leaders were genuinely worried that SCIRI would use federalism to strengthen its hold in the south. Al-Fiyadh said that the Sadrists were also worried about an expansion of SCIRI's influence but that most Sadrists CoR members were not against federalism "in their hearts." He said that he supported efforts to encourage the Sadrists CoR members to participate more actively in parliament as they would then develop their own ideas and become a moderating "wedge" between Muqtada al-Sadr and his popular base. They were already influencing Muqtada and serving this role to some extent, al-Fiyadh said.

¶3. (C) Bio note and comment: The son of a Baghdad Shi'a tribal leader from the al-Amri tribe, al-Fiyadh graduated with an engineering degree from Mosul University and worked for a state-owned oil company in Baghdad until his arrest in the early 1980s for involvement with the Dawa party. He was released from prison six years later when Saddam Hussein sought improved relations with tribal sheikhs like his father in the Baghdad area. Al-Fiyadh then opened a private engineering office, where he worked until 2003. Al-Fiyadh clearly has a close relationship with Ibrahim al-Ja'fari. He referred to al-Ja'fari several times in the conversation, once praising him for his role in bringing Muqtada al-Sadr into the political process and another time relating that al-Ja'fari had directed him to approach Tawafuq to propose a waiting period of three or four years before implementation of the regions formation law, rather than 18 months. (Al-Fiyadh said that he approached Tawafuq with this proposal the evening before the vote took place, but that Tawafuq did not respond.) End bio note and comment.

